

RAISING LOCAL RESOURCES



We Can Do It!

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About a year ago I was asked to speak in a small church in Kampala, Uganda. I had been there for other meetings and was asked to preach on a Sunday morning. Normally I decline such invitations, believing that it is the privilege of a pastor to preach to his own people. But this pastor prevailed upon me, so I prepared a simple message challenging the congregation to be all they can be for God. I reminded them that there is a big world out there waiting for their witness. This was a congregation of forty people meeting in a very modest building big enough for perhaps thirty.

Little did I know how God would use what I said on that occasion. It was not long before I heard that this congregation caught the vision of using local resources to do God's work. First, they began to pay their pastor a decent salary so that he could afford a better house. Second, they began a children's ministry in which they provided a home for twenty street children. Third, the congregation has encouraged their pastor to take the self-reliance message "on the road" to other countries. He and some other pastor colleagues have already gone to Kenya, Burundi and various places inside Uganda—and they have invitations pending for Tanzania, Zambia, Congo and Sierra Leone. This is all being done with local support within Uganda!

After this pastor spoke in western Kenya, people there decided to buy a car for their bishop. Following his visit to war-torn northern Uganda, he reported, "The people received the Good News of self-reliance with happiness." One church from there is sending their pastor to a self-reliance conference being planned for Nairobi in early

November. Another group in Kampala decided to buy a car for their pastor "after learning that they can do it."

Notice the sense of freedom and release in that last statement "after learning that they can do it." It reminds one of the Macedonian church in II Corinthians 8:2 about whom the Apostle Paul said, "Out of the most severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity." Paul goes on to say in verse four that "they begged for the privilege of giving."

What if they had never learned that they were not only free to give something back to God but able to do so!

It is sad that believers in Africa have often been given the impression that they cannot support their own churches, outreach ministries, or para-church organizations. Think about how much joy has been robbed from them in the process!

My current ministry includes a significant exchange of e-mails with church and mission leaders regarding the benefits of mobilizing local resources. This has resulted in a gathering of church leaders in Nairobi in November 2009 for those who have been teaching and writing about issues of sustainability. Those registered to attend come from Zambia, Kenya, Uganda and as far away as Nepal. These are leaders who have discovered the joy of giving to God and have passed the excitement along to their people. They eagerly anticipate attending this conference so they can share what God is doing in their midst. Some wanted to send in their accommodation fees for the conference several months ahead of time, such was their anticipation of wanting

to meet others who are like-minded. This conference is being organized and paid for by people in East Africa, and they could not be more excited or proud to have the privilege. As one of them told me recently, "Africa has seen the light."

My prayer is that the day will come when people all over Africa and in many other places in the world will come to the realization that with God's help, "We can do it." Let's encourage that to happen and, most importantly, let's not do anything to prevent it from happening. The challenge for westerners (like me) is to move out of the way so others can do what God is calling them to do with the resources He has put within their own arm's reach. f

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